

July 2013

The Trapline

United States Department of
Agriculture

Animal & Plant Health
Inspection Service

Wildlife Services



Cooperating with:

Nevada

Department of Agriculture

Division of Animal Industries



www.agri.nv.gov

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Mission Statement

The Nevada Wildlife Services Program (WS) is a collaborative program involving the Nevada Department of Agriculture's Division of Animal Industries (State) and the USDA-APHIS-Wildlife Services Program (federal), whose mission is to protect agriculture, natural resources, property, and the human health and safety of the citizens of Nevada from the threat of injury, damage, or resource loss due to wildlife.

Introduction

During July, wildlife damage management work was conducted on an estimated **3.5** million acres of land under agreement. On these lands, WS personnel helped Nevada's farmers and ranchers protect over **\$36.2** million in agricultural resources such as cattle, sheep, and livestock feed; and over **\$8.3** million in natural resources. Additionally, WS assisted **218** persons and entities with technical assistance which involves providing information or equipment to cooperators so they can resolve problems themselves. Cooperators reported **\$13,523** in damage and WS Specialists verified another **\$31,650** in damage to other agricultural resources. These losses would be much higher without an effective wildlife damage management program. During July, coyotes accounted for **\$12,165** in verified losses, mostly to livestock, and **107** coyotes were taken with a variety of management methods to resolve these and other ongoing complaints. WS routinely collects blood samples or oral swabs from species taken or handled during normal control activities for monitoring the presence of plague, avian influenza, and other diseases. In July, **30** samples were processed.

The following excerpts are a selection of activities and events of this program which occurred during the month of July, 2013.

Resource Protection

State Office

During June, 2013, the State Office trap loaning program was suspended because of personnel deployed to Afghanistan. The State Office hopes to resume the trap loaning program in November-December. Technical assistance to assist Nevadans with alleviation of damage will still be provided, as well as response to reasonable imminent threats to human health and safety.

East District

On July 8th, a sheep producer in Nye County called concerning the loss of three yearling lambs, to coyote predation. The value of the lambs was placed at \$300. On July 9th, the Ely plane responded to the location. With the assistance of WS Scott Little as the ground crew, the plane was able to locate and remove one adult coyote near the kill site. No further losses have been reported and technical assistance was provided in the form of non-lethal recommendations to help prevent future predation issues. The sheep owner called the Ely District Office and expressed her appreciation for the help provided by Wildlife Services.



On July 19th, a sheep producer in western White Pine County called concerning the loss of several lambs, to coyote predation. On Saturday, July 20th, the Ely plane

responded to the location. District Supervisor (DS) Joe Bennett acted as the ground crew and confirmed the loss of eight lambs, valued at \$800, to coyote predation. During the three hour flight, the plane was able to remove five coyotes, including a pair of adult coyotes near the kill site. No further losses have been reported and the sheep producer called and expressed her appreciation for the help and the fact that the work was performed on a weekend.

On Sunday July 20th, DS Bennett received a call concerning a lion near Baker, Nevada. The lion had killed one lamb and injured a calf in the backyard of a homeowner, on the outskirts of Baker, Nevada. DS Bennett traveled to the location and confirmed a lion had caused the damage. From the size of the tracks it was determined that the



same lion had killed two lambs, about two miles away last month. DS Bennett set two leg hold traps and one large cage trap for the depredating lion. On July 23rd, the lion returned to the kill site and was captured in the cage trap. No further losses have been reported. The



lion was a young male that weighed about 80 pounds. Because mountain lions that kill livestock will continue to kill livestock over and over again, the lion was euthanized and turned into the Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW) office in Ely, Nevada.

During the week of July 29th, a Nye County sheep producer reported the loss of two lambs, to coyote predation. In response, the Ely plane flew the ranch on July 30th, with WS Little as ground crew. Seven coyotes were removed during the operation. The producer had used guard dogs in the previous years, but didn't have any this year. The effect was excessive predation during the daylight hours. The Ely plane and WS Little will continue to monitor the situation and help when possible. The producer was thankful for the prompt assistance and also plans to obtain guard dogs.



On the evening of July 29th, WS Little and Staff Biologist (SB) Jack Sengl rode around alfalfa fields,

reducing damage that black-tailed jack rabbits were causing to an alfalfa grower's livelihood. The two worked the area over with a spotlight, removing 47 jack rabbits with firearms.

Throughout the month of July, Mountain Lion Specialist (MLS) Jim Buhler continued to investigate possible lion depredations in White Pine County, riding the country along with his hounds.

During the month of July, WS Mac Crome documented the loss of six lambs, valued at \$502, to coyote predation in Elko County. WS Crome was able to remove eight coyotes near the kill sites, utilizing trapping and calling. No further losses have been reported to date and the sheep herders are very pleased with the great efforts put forth by WS Crome.



During the month of July, WS Derril Fry documented the loss of seven lambs, valued at \$586, to coyote predation in Elko County. In response to the depredations, WS Fry utilized trapping and calling to remove four coyotes. WS Fry will continue to protect livestock from predation.

During the month of July, WS Matt Spires was busy removing five coyotes in response to the loss of 30 lambs, valued at \$2,512, to coyote predation in White Pine County. WS Spires will continue to protect livestock in his challenging country and conditions.

WS Scott MacDonald hit the ground running in July, removing six coyotes to protect livestock in his new position.

During the month of July, WS Dayne Barnes continued wildlife protection efforts in the Delamars under NDOW project 6. WS Barnes monitored trail cameras and equipment, checked lion corridors and water holes for sign and removed four coyotes with the use of calling and ground equipment.

West District

On July 16th, Pilot Wes Gossard and Crew Member (CM) Brandon VanderMay conducted aerial operations around several lamb bands in Lyon County. During the flight, one coyote was removed. WS Smith provided ground support during aerial operations. Flying with 100 degree temperatures can be a little tricky; however, WS aircrews are extremely well trained and practiced. Protection efforts will be ongoing until the lamb bands travel into neighboring California allotments.



On July 17th, a livestock producer and several homeowners from Lyon County reported that several lions had been seen near their houses, with one lion killing several cats and a pet dog. Another homeowner reported a lion sitting on her front porch and feared for her small child. Although rare, lions have been documented attacking, killing and eating people. WS Nick Smith inspected the situation and placed trail snares around a residence that resulted in the removal of a female lion the following morning. The ranchers and residents were very pleased with WS Smith's protection efforts. Each summer, lion complaints occur in Smith Valley and in recent years, the lion complaints have been steadily on the rise.

On July 18th, WS George Hansen was busy removing coyotes around several sheep bands in Lander County. During the month, WS Hansen only had one lamb lost to coyotes, to which he promptly

removed the offending coyote by using leghold traps. WS Hansen will continue to protect livestock in his large work area.

During the month of July, WS John Peter was busy riding one mule while leading another, loaded with traps, around several bands of sheep located in a remote mountainous area in Lander County. WS Peter has trail snares and leghold traps set around the sheep and has been removing coyotes steadily, every week, since he started livestock protection efforts. WS Peter will continue to protect livestock in this area till the fall months.

On July 30th, DS Jack Spencer met with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Western Pacific Safety Inspector Aiken and a local International Airport Manager to address any possible wildlife concerns and work together toward long term goals for the airport to reduce future wildlife threats to aviation. The FAA inspector was very pleased with the wildlife protection efforts, with no complaints. DS Spencer will continue to reduce wildlife threats to aviation at the International Airport.

On July 30th, a livestock producer from Lyon County reported that one goat (valued at \$200) had been killed and partially buried. A neighbor also reported a calf missing and yet another neighbor reported seeing a lion walking around her yard for the past few days. WS Smith inspected the situation and confirmed that a lion had been in the vicinity. The weather in this portion of Nevada had been well over 100 degrees on a daily occurrence, which makes trailing lions with hounds a little difficult. WS Smith released hounds near the dead goat and for over an hour the hounds worked the track crossing a large river several times before baying the offending lion on the ground next to an abandoned barn. WS Smith promptly removed the old female lion putting an end to the damage. The livestock producers in the area were very pleased with WS Smith's livestock protection efforts and quick results. WS Smith has trained dry land hounds, mules and horses to help resolve lion complaints in his work area.



During the month of July, DS Spencer continued to reduce wildlife threats to aviation at the prior mentioned airport. DS Spencer has been busy spending several days a week and several week-ends trying to reduce ongoing wildlife threats to the airport. Airport personnel reported that coyotes and mule deer had been observed on airport property and were concerned for the safety of the airlines and passengers. Working with NDOW and local police, DS Spencer removed one deer and harassed three more that were just outside the perimeter fence. Two coyotes were also removed during the reporting period for crossing active runways. To reduce the draw

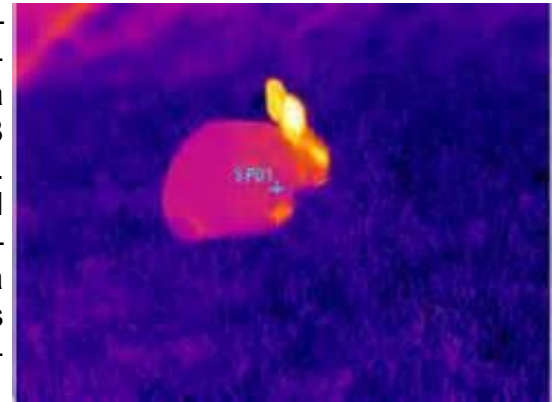


to avian and mammalian predators, zinc phosphide was applied to reduce the ground squirrel prey base. DS Spencer also recommended that the airport reduce the vegetation height to discourage deer and coyotes from lingering around the airport.



During the month of July, Wildlife Biologist (WB) Zack Bowers continued to deter great blue herons, mallards, coyotes and other wildlife from using/crossing the airfield. In an effort to keep these species from crossing the airfield, WB Bowers has utilized harassment with propane cannons, vehicle, voice and physically chasing them off. Utilizing these methods, WB Bowers harassed two mallards, three coyotes, and ten barn swallows from the airfield. WB Bowers has the ability to utilize pyrotechnics on the airfield as well. However, due to the dry conditions WB Bowers has refrained from using them. In addition to non-lethal methods, WB Bowers lethally removed four coyotes after witnessing an increase in coyote activity on the airfield. Coyotes present on the airfield have the potential to cause damaging strikes to aircraft. Coyotes quickly habituate to non-lethal methods and it becomes necessary to use lethal control.

In an effort to decrease the attractiveness of the airfield to red-tailed hawks and coyotes, DS Spencer and WB Bowers conducted a black-tail jackrabbit night removal project. Utilizing a forward looking infrared (FLIR) device, DS Spencer and WB Bowers removed seven black-tail jackrabbits from the airfield. July continued to be very hot and dry, which makes the airfield and surrounding property very attractive to black-tail jackrabbits and other wildlife, due to the water and cover the area provides. Even after irrigation ceases, there are still ditches that maintain water throughout the year. WB Bowers will continue to monitor the situation.



New and Developing Methods

Nothing to Report

Valuing and Investing in Employees

On July 16th and 17th, DS Bennett conducted a two day field inspection with WS Crome near Jackpot, Nevada. WS Crome is doing an excellent job protecting several bands of sheep in the area. Several sheep camps were checked for losses during the inspection and more than thirty traps were inspected.

On July 24th, the West District had their required annual district meeting in Reno. During the district meeting, employees received a firearms training refresher course in the field and completed required office duties. Wildlife Biologist (WB) Zack Bowers was selected as the West District's "Employee of the year". A BBQ for the district employees followed shortly after the meeting.



On July 29th and 30th, SB Sengl filled in for DS Bennett, conducting a "late to bed, early to rise" field inspection with WS Little in his country. As with all of our folks, WS Little is doing an excellent tireless job, protecting livestock and agriculture in his area. Ground crewing, spotlight shooting, calling, equipment inspection and cooperator contacts were conducted during the inspection.

On July 31st, SB Sengl conducted a field inspection with WS Barnes on his NDOW project. WS Barnes introduced SB Sengl to his vast country, checking equipment and covering ground. Most of the water holes that generally hold water this time of the year were dry, making it a bit easier to target

any lions that move into the project area. It was obvious to SB Sengl that trying to understand the project from a map and text could only provide a novice understanding of the country and the challenge of the projects goal. WS Barnes is a truly knowledgeable, driven and dedicated employee who is greatly appreciated.

Information and Communication



During July, WB Luke Barto continued to be busy doing surveys, habitat modifications (herbicide applications to phragmites with prescribed burn follow up), direct control and technical assistance around a military base in Afghanistan. What few trees are on the base attract a lot of small birds such as this European roller which caused \$45,000 in damage to an aircraft. These birds cross the runways to roost at night and has been one of the larger challenges lately. Harassment throughout the night utilizing a power washer is planned to alleviate the threat.

WB Barto has also been piecing together the last 12 months of data for a Wildlife Hazard Assessment which will lead to a Wildlife Hazard Management Plan that airbase personnel will be able to utilize to stay ahead of wildlife threats and have the mechanism to respond to seasonal changes in wildlife threats to aviation.

Emerging Trends/Issues



During the month of July WS Ben Miller was busy checking equipment around known mule deer fawning areas, on the Washoe County Mule Deer protection project (hunt unit 014). WS Miller's hard work, dedication and expertise in protecting mule deer and bighorn sheep from lions and coyotes in hunt unit 014 may be coming to an end. The Nevada Board of Wildlife Commissioners recently voted to reduce funding of the Washoe County Mule Deer protection project by 65%. This will likely result in WS Miller seeking employment outside of WS. On a positive note, WS Miller can proudly leave with the knowledge that the deer and bighorn herds were failing when he began and after years of his hard work, both mule deer and bighorn sheep are flourishing in hunt unit 014. WS Miller walked onto the project in 2005 with an estimated mule deer population of 900 and a California bighorn sheep population of 40. After removing 52 lions and 965 coyotes, the mule deer population is currently estimated to be 1,500 and the bighorn sheep population is currently estimated to be 120. In 2005, 44 mule deer tags and 1 sheep tags were sold to Nevada Sportsmen. In 2012, 174 mule deer tags and 4 California bighorn sheep tags were sold to Sportsmen. Picture of WS Miller holding his Wayne E. Kirch conservation award from 2009.

Also recently the NDOW Commission voted not to fund the Desert bighorn sheep, mule deer, and antelope protection project in Lincoln County (hunt unit 241). WS Dayne Barnes has spent the last 3 years in the Delamar Wilderness putting in many 12-14 hour days riding mules through the challenging wilderness terrain with hounds, monitoring predator and game populations, running and checking ground equipment, removing coyotes and lions from around the bighorns and water sources. WS Barnes' efforts have reduced predation events on Desert bighorn sheep in hunt unit 241 to zero. As with WS Miller, every effort will be made to find work for WS Bar-



nes, although none currently exist.

During the month of July, suburban residents in Washoe County reported the loss of eight pets (valued at \$4,000) to coyotes. As with June, coyotes that seemed to cause the most damage were adult coyotes feeding their sub adults. The young should be feeding themselves in September, though the damage will continue. Non-lethal technical assistance was given to homeowners to help better protect pets from coyote predation. Urban coyotes will continue to cause pet losses in the Reno/Sparks area for the foreseeable future.

Equal Employment Opportunity/Civil Rights (EEO/CR)

Nothing to Report

Future Meetings and Events

August 2nd and 3rd. NDOW Commission Meeting in Fallon. SD Jensen to attend.

August 6th. Nevada Board of Agriculture meeting in Elko. SD Jensen to attend.



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